

in the city, the gun squad assembled the gun, the squad, and black leaders of the community on a boat and demonstrated the gun's ability on November 1, 1898.⁶⁸

Chief of Police Melton estimated that there were between 2,000 and 3,000 guns in the city by the election. Reports of accidental shootings were scattered throughout the papers. In the *Morning Star* the day of the election, 2 articles near each other reported that a white man accidentally shot a compatriot while "inspecting" a pistol on the street, and a white "guard" was wounded by a black man with an "old fashioned rifle or shotgun loaded with buck" in Brooklyn. The day before, the *Messenger* claimed that Norfolk merchants were shipping guns to North Carolina in record numbers over the past 30 days. The *Messenger* observed that "there will be no guns or pistols publicly displayed at the voting places . . . but the bushes will be full of them." A reporter visiting the city estimated that there were "enough small arms imported in the state in the last sixty days to equip an entire division of the United States army." He noted that the whites were armed with Winchesters and that the blacks were equipped with "old army muskets, shotguns, or pistols." Waddell's preelection night speech summed up the mood of the Democrats:

You are Anglo-Saxons. You are armed and prepared, and you will do your duty. Be ready at a moment's notice. Go to the polls tomorrow, and if you find the Negro out voting, tell him to leave the polls and if he refuses kill, shoot him down in his tracks. We shall win tomorrow if we have to do it with guns.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The exhibition of the gun as it was shot down river near Eagle's Island proved to African American leaders that if it were used against men in the streets, scores would die in a short span of time. *Contested Election Case*, 344-6.

⁶⁹ There are conflicting descriptions of the rapid fire gun(s) in the city and there was more than just one rapid fire gun in Wilmington. The *Messenger* reported on the day of the election that a "rapid-fire

In such an atmosphere, African Americans also sought to arm themselves. However, the menacing control exerted by white supremacy advocates over life in the state identified efforts of blacks to purchase weapons. One such attempt was widely publicized in local and state papers. According to Democratic newspapers, William Lee and M. H. McAllister tried to order rifles from Winchester Arms Company of New Jersey. The company referred the request to their North Carolina agent, Odell Hardware of Greensboro. Odell's manager, Charles H. Ireland, suspicious of the order, contacted Wilmington merchants William Worth and Nathaniel Jacobi. After learning that Lee and McAllister were black, Odell refused to fill the order and forwarded the request to the *News and Observer*, which then looked into the matter. Editor Josephus Daniels discussed the issue with Iredell Meares of Wilmington who said that William Lee was actually John William Lee, chairman of the New Hanover County Republican Executive Committee. Local Republicans denounced the claims as they were published in the *News and Observer* and local papers, particularly since the county Republican chair's full name was actually John Wesley

Hotchkiss gun arrived here last night by the New York steamer for the Wilmington Division, North Carolina Naval Battalion." Charles H. White testified that he assisted in operating the gun purchased by "the people of the city" and it was a Colt that could fire 420 shots per minute. *Contested Election Case*, 343-6, 362; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 8, 1898; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 7, 1898; Iredell Meares, "the Wilmington Revolution," Smithwick Papers, State Archives, Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; Alfred Moore Waddell as quoted in *Outlook*, November 19, 1898; *Wilmington Messenger*, November 8, 1898.